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AUTHOR Rush, Ramona R.
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ABSTRACT

It is no longer "new" news that the "new" media, separately or in convergence with the traditional mass media, are often reinforcing old ways and traditional patterns. Concentration of ownership; under- or misappropriate employment patterns for certain groups and classes of people; and inadequate, inappropriate, and inaccurate content have been identified in the traditional media--patterns and trends which seem likely to continue in the new media. Basic and applied research should concentrate on analyzing inequities in traditional societal structures, where better and more appropriate communication and information is needed. Potential and already existing new societal structures, especially those built around communication and information where "flow-keeping" agendas predominate need to be identified and used as models. Current theories, conceptual frameworks, and research approaches should be tried for their "fit" for the information age. Some theories, which on the surface appear most adaptable for creating opportunities for societal structuring of communication in conjunction with information improvement and equity, include knowledge gap hypothesis, information and innovation flow and diffusion, media dependency, convergence and systems theories and network analysis. The conceptual framework of the assessment approach called "global eco-communication" includes efficiency, effectiveness, and entertainment from traditional communication and information concerns, and diversity, equity, and improvement as the other but equal side of the research coin. (A 17-item bibliography is attached; an appendix outlines a proposal for a master's program in global eco-communications.) (NKA)

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Global Eco-Communication:

Assessing the Communication and Information Environment

Ramona R. Rush, Ph.D.
Department of Communication, College of Communications
234 Grehan Bulding
University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40506-0042
606/257-7809 or 272-2723

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Global Eco-Communication:

Assessing the Communication and Information Environment

Synopsis

It is no longer "new" news that the "new" media, separately or in convergence with the widely-known, traditional mass media, are often reinforcing old ways, traditional patterns. Concentration of ownership; under- or misappropriate employment patterns for certain groups and classes of people; and inadequate, inappropropriate, and inaccurate content have been identified in the traditional media. These patterns and trends seem likely to continue in the new media. As I have written elsewhere, communication revolutions may come and go, but the actors remain the same. (Rush and Allen, forthcoming) Thus, basic and powerful communication structures which have built-in inequities can be predicted to remain firmly in place in the so-called "Information Age" or "Communications Era" unless major changes in attitude and behavior, access and control, management and ownership, are made.

Basic and applied research in these instances should concentrate on analyzing possible "cracks" and "gaps" (i.e., structural inequities) in traditional societal structures, where more and appropriate communication and information is necessitated. Potential and already-existing new societal structures, especially those built around communication and information where "flow-keeping" agendas predominate, need to be identified and used as models. (Rush and Allen, forthcoming)

Current theories, conceptual frameworks, and research approaches must be tried for their "fit" for the Information Age. Some which on the surface appear most adaptable to creating opportunities for societal structuring of communication in conjunction with information empowerment and equity include knowledge gap hypothesis, information and innovation flow and diffusion, media dependency, convergence and systems theories and network analysis.

The assessment approach purported in this paper is called "global eco-communication." Its conceptual framework includes efficiency, effectiveness, and entertainment from traditional communication and information concerns; and diversity, equity, and empowerment as the other but equal side of the research coin.

Global Eco-Communication

"Eco-communications" was used (for the first time, I believe) in the introduction to as well as in a contributor's chapter for a book about women, communications, and the future -- Communications at the Crossroads: the Gender Gap Connection. (Rush and Allen, forthcoming) I had suggested the term to futurist Hazel Henderson in the mid-1980s because it seemed to tie together many of concepts she had delineated in her writings, such as eco-feminism and eco-philosophy. (Henderson, 1969, 1978, 1981, 1982, 1984/85, forthcoming) In the introduction to the book, I wrote:

"Communications at the Crossroads" is one of the three metaphors in the book title. It generally indicates that the broad *intersection* of human equity movements with that of the increasing efficiency in a system produced by advances in the tools of communication technology, is a crucial one indeed. The compatibility of equity and efficiency in a system maintained by one group's interest among the many possible is usually and at best an equation of balance between need and greed and, at worst, a dysfunctional system aberration at any species' level.

The "gender gap" metaphor has gained recent notoriety as a political division between men and women, usually operationalized in number of votes cast for particular individual/isssues. Beneath this superficial measurement of differences lie, in the premise of this chapter and book, the unused or misused intelligence and experiences of more than one half of the world's population. The "connection" metaphor, in this sense, is to bring the women's issues agenda into balance with that of men's. It is, thus, an **"eco-communication"** vision of society, where our houseful of information is truly in order because the housekeeping duties are shared by all. (Rush and Allen, forthcoming, p. xiv)

"Eco-communication" stands for the ecology of communications and information -- the mutual communicative and informative relations among humans, as a species, and between them and their environment. Two models fit here -- one from the early biological viewpoint concerning relations of living organisms to their environment. The other relates to the contemporary environmental concerns movement, such as the recent Alaskan oil spill. The

idea of "ecosystem" is compatible in that it is the complex of a community and its [communication and information] environment functioning as an ecological unit in nature.

Eco-communications is seen as an integrative, realistic, networking force among humans and their concerns for the inclusion and well-being of all planetary species' information and communication systems. (Many of us sent e-mail "Thanks@Alaska" messages to the unpaid, clean-up volunteers.) The process of eco-communication as envisioned and when fully working in a community will help people to secure important and relational places in a changing, ongoing society which would challenge and enhance their unique contributions. A truly integretative eco-communication system will prevent any long-term estrangement or dysfunction or displacement, except perhaps temporarily, between the individual and the state.

When so many automobile workers, steel and coal miners lost their jobs in the 1980s, for example, a truly integrative, interactive communication and information system and sub-systems would have predicted and understood the dire consequences of a national employment displacement and transition. More importantly, it would have comprehended and planned for the attitudinal (many persons long believed their old jobs would open up again and refused to seek others) and behavioral (spouse, child, drug and other form of abuse) problems sure to follow. Online, computerized job training program possibilities, job skills needed, and job openings could have been matched and individualized not only for the out-of-work persons but for all members of the family who could work. Local, state, and federal governments could have integrated their information systems, with proper individual privacy safeguards, to maximize providing the most benefits

(including mental and physical health care) for the most needy in the shortest amount of time with the least cost to everyone. Such examples can be envisioned for each person who has a particular need but not a known, appropriate, integrative, informational system to access. It is in such examples that the futurists' well-known motto, "thinking globally and acting locally," can be operationalized.

"Global eco-communication" is a modern version of the "one world" concept. The difference is that now we indeed have the communication and information technology to make time and space invisible -- one-world is a functioning, pragmatic reality, at least in terms of transborder data flows. The question is if economic constructions (e.g., hierarchical) , political rewards (i.e., power maintenance), and social considerations (e.g., user socialization patterns and habits) will allow eco-communications to become a reality.

A global eco-communication system, in application, provides a map of communication and information flows and gaps and continually works to improve delivery methods, channels, and content for filling the lacunae. It is what I have elsewhere called a "flow-keeping agenda." (Introduction, Rush and Allen, forthcoming) As we develop approaches more in keeping with shrinking of time and space because of advancements in communication and information technology, we can quite possibly draw on and rethink research derived from known and productive theories, conceptual frameworks, and hypotheses including those of pluralistic ignorance, spiral of silence, agenda setting, uses and gratifications.

And as we develop holistic, non-linear, relational research approaches, we can re-apply, with a different, equity-focused mindset, the use of demographic information, personal and impersonal interviews and survey market and business research, secondary analysis of existing data, case studies, historical studies of technological innovation and application, participatory and longitundinal research with interactive media.

The Keystone and the Building Blocks

The keystone in the eco-communication approach to information dispersion is **diversity**. Diversity of thought, of information, of communication. The word appeals to most of us because it respects variety, different approaches, multiformity. Yet, with the usually-artificial boundaries, constraints, and ideologies we place on our systems and sub-systems of communication and information, we tend to operationally perceive such differences as negative, strange, threatening, fearsome, loathsome. And often these perceptions are behaviorally expressed in wasted competition and stress, conflict, invasion, rape, wars. Di-versity then becomes a di-visive force to tear asunder flesh and minds and commonalities -- commonalities which most species on this earth share, and must share, in order to achieve eco-communication enhancements.

If we in the academic field look around at our reading materials, it does not take long to find a report about "diversity." While these documents speak about the importance having diversity and acknowledging diversity, they most often are a plea for or a plan to achieve diversity while in the midst of plenty of it. Three-quarters of the world's population which live in nearly or completely survival economies are a diverse people, but they haven't the health or wealth or education or employment or time or power to develop and

display their uniqueness. The single heads of households who are mainly women and often poverty-stricken together with their children in these United States and other countries are a diverse people, but they too often are homogenized and left powerless by their economic conditions.

These obviously are the worst case scenarios for recognition and acknowledge of diversity. The best case scenario often is where the plea for diversity comes from a member of a group which, because of one or more of the -isms (racism, ageism, classism, sexism) or the -phobias (homophobic), must continue to advocate diversity -- not its existence, but recognition and inclusion of it. The articulators are usually trained leaders of these isolated groups and/or are members of professional societal groups.

The concepts of **equality** and **equity** share important relationships with diversity. Yet, it can be argued that the expression of diversity will not happen, nor be allowed to occur even in the midst of the existence of it, if structural, attitudinal, and behavioral inequities are primary components of any system -- political, economical, bureaucratic, legalistic, educational, social, humanistic. If diversity is muted or stifled either by number, co-optation, coercion or force, then it is not unreasonable to expect that inequality is present for certain societal members and quite likely that inequity is built into the system.

When information and communication become not only a culture's way to talk to each other, to gain information to translate into knowledge, but also the mainstay economic force, then we have the double-bind problem of information as a source of ideas and information as a commodity. One type of information -- such as ideas -- we have a difficult time imagining ever being bought, packaged, sold or swapped like pork bellies; the other type --

such as entertainment -- we pay for every day and month of the year. But can we forego access to one without reliquinishing access to the other? Are they, or can they be, one and the same? If not, how do and will they differ? And who will be the producers and distributors and who will be the recipients? Or will they be one and the same? One type was found during the search for course materials for my graduate seminar on "global eco-communications and information" -- a book about "infopreneurs" (Weitzen, 1988) bristled for attention. The dustcover, in part, read:

"...a successful new breed of entrepreneurs who gather, organize, and disseminate information for high profit. They're called 'infopreneurs' and they're doing it with creativity, not capital. Infopreneurs: Turning Data into Dollars is the first complete guide to the opportunities available for setting up a business that generates or markets information. Information and marketing consultant H. Skip Weitzen details everything you need to know to manipulate data for profit, including the key to becoming a successful infopreneur: consolidating, isolating, and maximizing the profit potential of information. You'll learn how to leverage database information by tapping into the power of compiled names and data to enhance market responsiveness. You learn how to sift through and customize large amounts of information to meet your customers' needs. And you'll learn how to speed up the flow of information to gain advantages in volatile markets.

Weitzen also shows you how to gain access to hard-to-find information, organize and recombine information to create now [sic] products and services, use a computer-telephone-credit card system to obtain instant payment for the information you generate or market, and set up a 24-hour information delivery service. The book also provides advice and insights from numerous successful infopreneurs, plus a special section on how to participate in and capitalize on the government's need to streamline its information banks....

The Mass Media:
Drawing Straight or Encircling Lines Between Efficiency and Equality?

In these United States, we do not have important public fora about the promises, problems, and prospects of the so-called Information Age. We came the closest to such a forum on an international level with the

UNESCO-sponsored New World Communication and Information Order debates. But that discussion was primarily restricted to commercial and government communication and information elites at meetings organized and conducted by and for these groups. Most of the world's population was excluded from even knowing about such discussions. In the U.S., the mass media proclaimed that the women's movement was dead by declaring "post-feminism;" in comparison, the NWCIO was allowed only a stillbirth by the world's media.

The public is beginning to get some idea that the traditional mass media are indeed big business, conglomerates, multinational corporations, with actual or potentially big profit margins when they see the commercial broadcast networks -- the holy shrines of free airwaves -- bandied about on Wall Street and involved in mergers and takeovers. All of a sudden, oil, gas, and communications do not seem like strange economic bedfellows. It's not too far a leap of imagination, then, to see the communication and information industries, as industries and as part of the efficiency economy, as in capitalism and the marketplace. "The concept of efficiency," as economist Arthur Okun writes, "is that more is better, insofar, as the "more" consists of items that people want to buy." (1975, p. 2) Yet, many of us have a difficult time conceptualizing the bargaining, buying and selling of idea-information, let alone that we might equate today's information giants like IBM and ATT with the media barons of today and yesterday.

The information/communications media, then, wear a large hat which sits in delicate balance on their commercial, profit-oriented interests and on those public rights which are protected by the U.S. Constitution to aid and abet an informed citizenry. The media indeed have "bottom lines" and they indeed have editorial lines which might logically be viewed as often placing the media on a fine line between efficiency and equality. And since the

"news hole" is indeed diminishing in space and time allocation in relation to advertising, one might worry that if information is indeed power, such an imbalance might lead more towards impoverishment of the average person's pocketbook than to empowering democracy, equity, and human rights. People's current use of the media, exemplied in their "grazing" and "zapping" with remote-controlled television, are indicators of change which have implications for efficiency and equality -- but it's difficult to ascertain broad parameters for study at this point.

Traditional news-gathering: in transition to future informational needs. It is posited here information and news-gathering and reporting operations in the United States and other nations which have traditionally- practiced the "who, what, why, when, and how" formula will enlarge upon the time/space limited model. The "who, what, and when" of news and information were much easier to transport on the relatively-slow conveyer-belt systems available to national and world press systems than were the "whys and "hows" of the news -- producing a resultant "just give me the facts" mentality.

To continue to use an old formula in part or whole during immense social and economic change is bound to be frustrating, counter-productive and, too often, dysfunctional either in old economic production modes or in future human development terms. Today and tomorrow's electronic age of modern and future communications most likely will rapidly enter us into the "whys and the hows" from the old formula, largely because of the refinement, rapidity, and use of electronic processing of demographic and other descriptive and predictive population information and statistics.

There are parts of the the old formula which provide continuity to and an overlap with new global eco-communication approaches. Hundreds of

thousands of academic and marketing/advertising research studies have been conducted and considerable time and money spent to examine the concepts of "efficiency," "effectiveness," and "entertainment" as they are involved with economic persuasibility of the traditional media of mass communication and information. Yet, these concepts have seldom been studied alongside the democratic (human equity) part of the political equation in the U.S.; these foregoing concepts are mostly operationalized in study of and benefit to the capitalistic (market efficiency) part of the equation.

In effecting this change to an eco-communication system, information collection, processing, distribution, and utilization most likely will be under a framework which includes the concepts of diversity, empowerment, equity together with entertainment, efficiency, and effectiveness.

For a while at least, we in the U.S. and other countries need to give considerable attention to those concepts -- diversity, equity, empowerment -- which are most related to the neglected concepts in the old news formula, the "whys and hows". Once we establish as much information on and knowledge about these concepts as we have about efficiency, effectiveness, and entertainment, then can we examine all of them within holistic, interactive, integrative, systemic approaches. With the same actions, we can diffuse much of the stigma attached to efficiency, effectiveness, and entertainment as ideological, political, culture-bound, capitalistic concepts, and/or as traditional economic theories and functions. Instead, they can be placed as key and important parts of a humanistic approach to the development of ecologically-sound systems of global communications. And quite likely, those countries which now view the U.S. as an electronic colonialist might reconsider their current low regard for the "shopping basket of the world."

The traditional mass media of communication -- television, newspapers, radio, magazines, books, billboards, pamphlets -- have their own roles to play in this transition and as they evolve into their own modern and futuristic forms and channels. Theirs will be to generate "preventive" messages to the masses, so that societal complexities, connections, and integration can be better understood. Henderson first wrote of such things in 1969 in the Columbia Journalism Review. Nearly 20 years later, she was to review this piece of work and deciding that not much had changed on the part of the media, reiterated it (Henderson, forthcoming). She wrote that the individual must be re-connected to the community and state in this complex, mass society and the mass media, if they can assume a new, mature ethic, will take their responsible part in doing this.

Henderson believes that the current mass journalism is still largely based on the old, fragmented Newtonian vision -- where man was the dispassionate, objective observer of "his" world. Even though few people still believe that "man" (solely, collectively or generically) can ever observe the world objectively but is an interacting part of it, she writes, there is still a widespread lag on the part of our mass media in perception of this integral nature of reality. She notes that in the future "editors will see news of the integrative activities as well as their destructive acts. Like individuals, a society needs confidence in itself, and its ability to cope with its problems." (1969; forthcoming)

Few would suggest that the information/communication industry take part of their profits and feed it back into an information redistribution system at the community level as some socially-responsible banks are doing with capital investments. Yet, that kind of action is what happens when government money is diverted from the taxation of a capitalistic system into

entitlement programs, such as public education. The information/media conglomerates have mostly absentee ownership, but the application of their activities is primarily at the community/city levels. Therefore, they could establish non-profit institutes to help to map and fill the information gaps at the community level. Most certainly, public libraries and social services delivery programs must now be looked on as information training and referral centers in this new age. Job skills are now information and communication-related skills.

Uncovering the Unused and Disregarded Part of the Equation

Although it does not seem necessary here to delve into the usual questions -- who **controls** the information and communication flows, who **has access** and what type of access, who **designs** the information and communication systems and with what purpose(s), who **possesses** the skills, training, education, motivation to access the information and for what purposes -- these are part of the basic moral issues to which philosophers and researchers must direct their efforts in order to know more about the diversity and equality present in a system.

In the foreward of Okun's book, *Equality and Efficiency: The Big Tradeoff*, about the delicate balance between capitalism (or efficiency), and democracy (or rights and equity), it is noted that "Okun values the market as a decentralized and efficient system for spurring and channeling productive effort and for promoting experiment and innovation: he also sees it as a protector of individual freedom of expression. But he insists that other values must be protected from the potential tyranny of the dollar yardstick and that many rights and powers should not be bought for money." (1975, p. viii)

It seems that we desperately need to continue sifting and sorting within and between this efficiency and equality balance -- between these "big bucks" and these rights and powers -- in an age, a national and international developmental transition, known most often as the "Information Age" or the "Communications Era." When are we going to package information to sell it, and when are we going to provide information in message content and channels most appropriate to the needs, educational level, and economic and social status of those who might not be able to afford it? "Information packagers" or "information facilitators?" The distinction might become compelling and crucial.

Schaeffer and Lamb (1981, p. 2) who note that "equity as a concept and practice is above all a political fact." They continue:

> It is an ideological construct about distribution, about the apportionment of resources in a society, and therefore political in the sense of an intervention in the struggle of political ideas. And it is political in its procedural/substantive manifestations, the realisation through state action of an important aspect of political economic interrelations.

Swedish researchers Thunberg, Nowak, Rosengren, and Sigurd (1982) point to the work of Finnish sociologist Erik Allardt in his study of Scandinavian welfare, entitled "Having, Loving, Being" (1975). "Having " covers the traditional measures of objective welfare, income, health, education and occupation. "Loving" is about one's mutual relations with others, a sense of "belonging," the feeling that "somebody cares." "Being" has to do with one's opportunities to engage in meaningful work, which offers an existence in which one is valued as a person, not considered totally exchangeable with any number of other workers. As the authors note, there is a contradiction in that an individual cannot represent the whole of society and no specific individual can be adequately represented in any category based on one or another common denominator. "Consequently, the focus of our study must

oscillate between the collective and the individual, from the individual person to society, and from society back to the individual." (Thunberg, 1982, p.23) Schaeffer and Lamb (1981) note that "a criterion of equity must be capable of explaining the distributive outcomes of institutional encounters between the state and its citizens." (p. 2)

Perhaps the concept of "empathy" has had many of its conceptual and operational definitional problems because it was ahead of its time. If an individual is asked to put himself/herself in the place of the president of the country by possessing "psychic mobility," empathy as a operationalized concept in its earlier stages of development most likely died from the person's lack of information and knowledge about powerful societal positions. In other words, we need to map societal information/knowledge "gaps" by examining social structures to determine how far and what kind of information flows from individual to individual, individual to group, group to group, group to individual, and so on. In this effort, the literature on the mass media and the "knowledge gap hypothesis" (Donohue, Tichenor, and Olien 1975; Gaziano 1983) and, later, on a convergence model of communication and network analysis (Rogers and Kincaid 1981) may prove to be the most fruitful.

Perhaps some of us are becoming increasingly psychically (read: informationally) mobile as we interconnect in concentric and overlapping information feedback circles via networking. But others of us must pick (sometimes unknowingly) our paths based on the few and selected fragments of information passed "down" to us -- often a consuming, unproductive expenditure of precious energy-letting time with unknown and, thus, usually unrewarding or even frightening consequences. It is not impossible to map and measure where the lacunae of information are from an individual to her/his next relevant social system and back again. And to continue that process to

the next relevant social system beyond that and back again, and so on, until we have indeed plotted and mapped the gaps and the land fills and the valleys and the mountains of information and knowledge between the individual and the state. In this way, we can determine if it either is or it isn't an integrated, interactive system of information flow and communication; also if it either is or isn't to some quantitatively and/or qualitatively-determined degree which we can measure.

Equality must be viewed as much more than everybody getting "a piece of the pie." Futurist Hazel Henderson has illustrated that the pie's pieces and boundaries are in the eye of the dividers (forthcoming); and it can be suggested that there are different kinds of pies, some overt and some covert. We agree with a Swedish perspective that how opportunity is distributed throughout society reflects the degree of equality prevailing in that society. (Thunberg, et. al., 1982) It could be added, given our theme of information and communication, that "knowing" what the opportunities are and through what channels they are distributed to whom for what use lead us to key and possibly traditional research questions. The answers in this increasingly communication and information seamless society may differ from what we might have expected.

As noted above, one viewpoint of equality concerns the availability of opportunities in a society. (Thurberg, et al., 1982). The awareness of, access to, and consequent participation by societal citizens in these opportunities seem crucial. The capability to identify, assess, and access those opportunities which are "conspicuous by their absence" -- inequities such as women and minorities being largely absent from leadership positions -- is also necessary. Thus, "communication and information equity" might be defined as appropriate communication of information about the availability of

opportunities in society. "Communication and information empowerment" is thus enhanced when appropriate channels and content have indeed reached, persuaded, and motivated people to act (or choose not to act, if more appropriate) on available opportunities.

Recognizing the Powerline: empowering from within. The current process of information flows and gaps is more obvious to those who have more informational and communication opportunities and, in the information age, they may find it to their immediate benefit to try to keep it that way. Thus, it is going to be a moot point about having diversity based on equity of communication and information in the future if "empowerment" as a concept is not recognized, applied, and measured. There are those who would argue that the current possessors of power are not acceptable role models for those who need be enfranchised. But until opportunities are distributed more evenly than they are now in most societies, information and knowledge will equate mostly with power. Therefore, the opportunities need to be accessed and used for purposes of empowerment, leading to equity, by the currently unenfranchised and powerless.

Those in the front line of empowerment, such as those in the Southeast Women's Coalition, hold the subject in high discussion at conferences:

> . . . One of the most interesting discussions focused on "Powerlines" . . . the dividing lines in society which define who has power over whom. During this workshop . . . we attempted to:
>
> * recognize that all of us at one time or another are in 'power over' positions as well as 'power under' positions;
>
> * understand that our relative position of power affects how we relate to others as well as how we feel about ourselves;
>
> * identify barriers to those of us in 'power over' and 'power under' positions from working together collectively for common goals;
>
> * recognize the need to rethink/redefine how we view ourselves/relate to each other based upon relative positions of power.

Numerous examples of 'power over' and 'power under' positions were listed. Most are obvious but offer new insights when charted this way:

white	males	white men	wealthy	young	parent	doctor	urban
of color	females	white women	poor	old	child	patient	rural

In small groups, we discussed the cost of being powerless and the benefits of feeling powerful, concluding that powerlessness leads to negative, unhealthy feelings in all of us. Since the benefits in society go to the powerful, most of us would much rather be powerful than not. Also, it was apparent that those in powerless positions often focus a great deal of energy on criticizing those above (in power), trying to convince them to share their power or to give it up. Given the benefit that is inherent in being powerful in this society, our time could be better spent strategizing with others (equally powerless) about our own empowerment - a process which must come from within rather than being "granted" from above. We also have to realize 'coming into power' carries responsibility with it; as we become empowered we must beware of the pitfalls and temptations to misuse power, and must strive to avoid perpetuating its negative side. Sometimes our own attitudes and sense of worthlessness motivate behavior which allows people to maintain power over us. People without power have a hard time even thinking they might ever be powerful; to become powerful, we must believe in ourselves, feel good about ourselves, and stop accepting the powerline as though it were 'set in stone' for all time.

As we look around our communities, it is apparent that power, wealth and privilege are reserved for a small minority. Why then doesn't the (powerless) majority attempt to empower itself? Why don't we act collectively to 'get' some of the benefits of power? Unfortunately, there are so many barriers between and among us from working together on problems we share or have in common. The barriers of racism, classism, sexism, homophobia and so many others engendering fear and lack of trust prevent those of us in less powerful positions in this society from working together to challenge our powerlessness, and by so doing, we help maintain the powerlines. Our diversity and our numbers could be our strength but, in fact, they mostly serve as barriers to our working together to challege the many oppressions which the powerful minority maintains. (Generations, p.12)

Towards Assessing and Balancing the Equation

In the lead story of New Options' July 25, 1988 issue called, "Shifting the Framework from 'Growth' to 'Health'," there are many points which apply to the "communication and information environmental impact statement" suggested below. Perhaps our model should follow that of the World Health Organization (WHO) which has shifted its thinking about "public health policy" to thinking about "healthy public policy." WHO's 1986 "Ottawa Charter" has five key recommendations which are cited below. We have followed each of those statements with our own adaptation to produce an equivalent communication and information recommendation:

- Build healthy policy.
  - ¥ *Build healthy communication and information policy.*
- Create supportive environments.
  - ¥ *Create supportive communication and information environments.*
- Strengthen community action.
  - ¥ *Strengthen communication and information channels and expertise at the community level.*
- Develop personal skills.
  - ¥ *Develop personal communication and information skills.*
- Reorient health services.
  - ¥ *Reorient communication and information services.*

The WHO Canadian consultant noted that "healthy public policy is characterized by an explicit concern for health and equity in all aspects of public policy. See the [breakthrough] there? Equity is equated with health. It also says that public and private policymakers are to be held accountable for the health impacts of their policies." (New Options 1988, p. 2)

In comparison, communication and information need to be equated with equity and health. An example of a evaluation document to produce a communication and information environmental impact statement follows:

Distributive Communications and Information Inventory and Assessment: (DCIIA)

- An inventory of the journalism and communication schools, including such information as the orientation of the programs, number of faculty and students, degrees offered, and job placement of alumni.
- An inventory of the traditional, mainstream media, including radio, television, newspapers, magazines, billboards, and advertising and public relations agencies.
- An inventory of government communication and information channels, including those in universities.
- An inventory of "alternative media," including those of women's, minority, religious, political organizations.
- An assessment of communication technology firms and organizations, including computer, cd rom, satellite, videotape recorder, fiber optics, microwave relay, and cable companies. Also, an inventory of the type and number of related comunication and information software products, where applicable.
- An assessment of public libraries, including communication/information facilties/holdings.
- An assessment of public and private communication databases, gateways, and networks.
- Secondary and primary research on the access, use, and perceptions of the mass media and other communication and information channels by the public.
- An assessment of public policy and laws pertaining to communication and information collection, processing, distribution, and use.
- An assessment of individual privacy safeguards and ethical guidelines.

By using and adapting the DCIIA document, a research team collect have abundant data with which to evaluate the communication and information flows, and/or to use as a map for the collection of further data. Communication and information gaps, "haves" and "have nots," pollution and noise can be determined. Recommendations can then be made to the proper authories and organizations about how to further develop and

enhance communication and information equity, as well as having the necessary data with which to further social and economic policies. Graduate students in my Fall 1988 course on global eco-communications applied parts of the assessment inventory to various social sub-systems, with varying degrees of success: the more that local access could be achieved, the more helpful the assessment appeared to be. This kind of communications and information assessment and intervention needs to continue until the "gaps" in communications, information, and knowledge are identified and the communication- and informationally-disadvantaged brought into what then can accurately be called "mainsteam" society.

As we approach the year 2000, affirmative action and equal opportunity programs need proactive approaches so that by the turn of the Century all vestiges of discrepencies and discriminations due to gender, race, age, and/or sexual preferences have been removed. As one large and important place to start, the "pink ghettos" and "glass ceilings" which exist in the various in communication education programs and their supportive scholarly and professional associations organizations need connective steps taken immediately. One example of application is taken from an affirmative action/equal opportunity statement included in the report of the review of an academic unit in communications:

"Affirmative action, equal opportunity. The Department is not so different than the College and University in the under-or-no employment of female and minority faculty members. Yet, there is no excuse at any level in such a policy of inaction and under-action. The Department has a sizeable number of female students; not to have one female faculty member is unconscionable for many reasons. Within five years and the addition of the faculty members recommended above and clearly as a condition of those faculty members being added, the Department should have at least 50 per cent of the faculty who are either female, minority, or both. The Department will provide an annual status report to University administration and to the Office of Affirmative Action in order to obtain funding for the hiring of faculty each year."

The professional and scholarly communication organizations and associations can likewise take strong, connective steps by passing equity resolutions:

Be it resolved that the (communication organization) encourages its members and affiliates to have at least 50 percent of their faculties and staffs comprised of females, minorities, or both, by the year 2000.

The integretive, interactive training of communication and information students, especially at graduate levels, becomes crucial in their understanding of worldviews and applications of these views at local levels. Otherwise, there will be a lack of global continuity, of connectedness -- the wheel of civilization will continually have be re-invented and pushed up the mountain once again, a few inches at a time, by most of us. Appendix A illustrates one example of a modern specialized master's degree program in communications.

Epilogue

There is little doubt that, as global communication and information grids or utilities as Wilson Dizard (1985) and others envision them are put into place by powerful technological and economic forces, there will be a lag in the ecology of communications and information assessments which involve individual rights and public policy. In our weakest social conscience moments, there are some compelling arguments which urge letting the competitive forces of the marketplace shake society down into an efficient information machine.

But many of us are not willing to allow the messages and the ideas and the knowledge and the wisdom -- the software, if you will -- of communication and information to be developed separately from the hardware of another new age. Nor do we necessarily want the hardware to be developed in advance of the software which is society's dreams and visions for human and planetary development. We want not to just be assured but to "know" that the two systems will be compatible, for the good of all us rather than just a few.

At an October, 1988, meeting of the Special Libary Association on "Global Ties Through Information" in Washington, D.C., we were divided into groups to apply, with the use of a case study, what we had heard from a collection of well-known speakers on the topic. The case study was a compellingly-believable vision of the future in which five countries have taken over the communication and information channels of the world and are controlling access to health care information. It was believable precisely <u>because of</u> what we had heard the speakers tell us about the developing communication and information strategies, economic, and growth patterns. It was late in the day and we were all were stumped and willing to concede that the world indeed will become like the tragic depiction in the case study. But suddenly one person remembered the example of the telephone "lifeline" offered by a speaker when questionned about equity of distributed information. The following resolution was drafted and signed by participants at the conference:

There shall be universal access to a Lifeline of vital information available for each man, woman, and child in the world. This will be the human standard on which world technical standards emanating from organizations such as CCITT [International Telegraph and Telephone Consultative Committee] will be based.

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Appendix A

The following is a proposal for a specialized master's program which is in the planning stages only, but might provide some guidelines the structure of future programs in our field:

Center for the Advanced Study of Global Eco-Communications and Information

As countries of the world move from agricultural and industrial stages of national development to an interconnected, integrative global communications and information system, global citizens face many changes. The Center for the Advanced Study of Global Eco-Communications and Information was established to inventory, assess, and plan and prepare for these changes.

Purpose

The Center's goal is to provide mature, dedicated students an opportunity to participate in the improvement of the quality of life for all invididuals in a world society through critical and experiential education in the problems, promises, and perspectives of communications and information technology. Those who successfully complete the graduate program will be trained as communications and information analysts and facilitators with expertise in mapping and understanding the flows and gaps of communication and information in a defined system. In order to effect this, the Center offers professional research training leading to a master's degree in communications, emphasizing the study of communication and information technology applications in a global society.

The special emphasis master's degree program includes:

* graduate courses which emphasize global communication and information perspectives;
* a communications and information technology research laboratory/practicum;
* experiential education involving an internship with a communications/information delivery agency, organization or business

Educational model

The educational model employed by the Center concentrates on the citizen/consumer/client in a communication and information society. The underlying premise is that information is a renewable resource and must be available in appropriate content and channels for the equitable use by all individuals, in the U.S.A. and worldwide. Further, that citizens of all countries have a right as well as a responsibility to communicate and must be provided the necessary understanding and skills to directly enter into and participate in the communication and information process; otherwise, global society will have a large and growing class of persons who are communicatively and informationally disabled.

Operational applications

Students admitted to the program have a core curriculum consisting of Global Eco-Communication and Information; International/Intercultural Communication Perspectives; Science, Ethics, and Philosophy in the Communications Era; and Secondary and Futuristic Research Methods. Center students are under the auspices of the College of Communication's graduate program. They draw upon that total course curriculum and activities to complete the degree requirements, under the supervision of of a graduate adviser and in accordance with the student's professional and educational background and career interests. Applications from foreign as well as U.S. students will be encouraged, and graduate stipends will be awarded to those students who are competitively selected.

Students operate and participate in an on-line computer laboratory with the capability of accessing worldwide information networks and databases. It is in this research practicum that graduate students will conduct on-line participatory research relating to information flows, gaps and use in the delivery of service, education, and knowledge to citizens/clients/consumers.

The students also participate in a one-semester (or equivalent) experiential education program at the end of their coursework in which they are employed by a government agency, social services delivery agency, private company, voluntary organization, hi-tech firm, or other agency which specializes in delivering information to citizens, clients, and/ or consumers.

Center Funding:

The College of Communications provide the facilities, staff, core instruction, graduate student stipends, and computer laboratory for the Center. Other Center expenses and research operations and projects are funded through external grants and awards.

Center Structure

The Center has an operational and core-instructional staff comprised of faculty members from the College of Communications' academic units of Communication, Journalism, and Telecommunications.

Center Associates are nominated and selected from the University , including the Departments of Sociology, Political Science, Geography, Computer Science, Library and Information Science, Economics, Anthropology, and Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Business, Education, Social Work, Medicine, Allied Health, Home Economics, and Agriculture. University Extension, the state's Educational Television network, the state's mass media organizations and hi-tech industry are also included in the Association.

Center Adjunct Professors and Lecturers are appointed regularly for instructional and research purposes from local, state, national, and international governmental and educational agencies, from voluntary organizations as well as from innovative small business enterprises and multinational corporations.

The Center has a Board of Governors: a 12-member advisory panel comprised of citizens, consumers, and clients, representing a broad spectrum of local, state, national, and international groups.